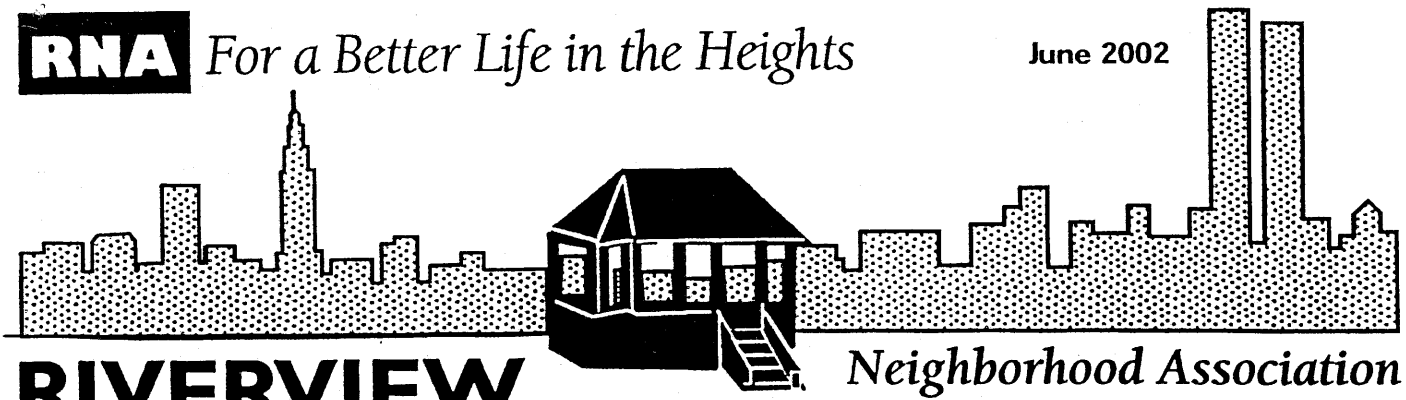
RNA *For a Better Life in the Heights*

June 2002



RIVERVIEW *Neighborhood Association*

469 Palisade Avenue, Jersey City, NJ 07307(201) 386-9481

RNA IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY, ORGANIZATION or ELECTED OFFICIAL

NEW PLAN'S FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESS BUILDING

Members of RNA and **Heights Hope** reviewed new plans for the **Jehovah's Witness** (JW) project being proposed for the corner of New York Avenue and South Street. The plans were formally submitted to the City on May 31, 2002. As we go to print, there is no specific date for the application to be presented to the Planning Board. However, here are some initial reactions after examining the revised plans.

JW is now requesting variances for building coverage, setbacks and landscaping. The proposed building would cover 65% of the lot even though the City's R-1 zoning requirement limits building coverage to 50%. The most excessive variances are for the setbacks of the front, side and rear yards to the property. JW propose only a 1 foot front yard whereas the City demands a 20 foot setback. The side and rear yard setbacks - although technically adhering to the footage requirements - are being in reality, being used for other purposes, including two driveways and parking of cars.

The project has attempted to solve their off-street parking problem by creating a parking lot under the building - a lot which will barely fit 24 compact automobiles.

Although there are certain changes to this latest proposal, the project is still too large for the location. There are still the

Continued on Page 4

COMING EVENTS

RNA MEETING: Tuesday, June 11th, 7:15 PM

Location: Harbor View Health Care Center

Agenda:

1) How to Deal with Unlawful Activity in and around Riverview-Fisk Park
2) Park Improvements
3) Update on Development Projects in our neighborhood and Hoboken

HOLLAND STREET CLEAN-UP

Spring arrived on Holland Street on May 19th with the annual clean-up and planting. The cobblestone terraces constructed last year were weeded and new flower beds were established below the Riverview Park lookout With the generous donations of plants, topsoil, mulch and money, community residents were able to prepare and plant for the coming summer. By the end of the day a wide variety of annuals and perennials were planted: Dusty Millers, Black Eyed Susan's, Mountain Pinks, Forget-Me-Nots and Junipers to name a few. This wide array of planting will keep Holland Street green and in bloom into the Fall. Make regular visits, the show will always be changing!

Special thanks to those businesses that donated: **Bluestone Perennials** (800) 852-5243, **Charlie's Nursery** (201) 998-8206, **Home Depot** in Secaucus, **Hudson Farmers Market** on Kennedy Blvd., **Hugerich Garden Center** (201) 864-6294, **Partytime Productions** (201) 610-0920, **Richfield Farms** (973) 777-7535, and individual staff members of **HSBC Bank** in New York. Co-sponsored by **Save The Palisades** and RNA, with participation by **Heights Hope Neighborhood Association**.

? Quick Fix Zoning ?

The possibility of the new zoning laws being amended seems to be in the works. It would have a huge impact not only on our immediate neighborhood, but all of the Heights and other long established neighborhoods. Our city spent an enormous amount money for outside consultants, city staff time and resident's time to create a new Master Plan that was finally enacted last April into new zoning laws. Why the quick change to allow new residential construction with curb cuts, front yard parking, garages and buildings closer to the rear lot line?

Just a "quick fix" for the developers, at our expense !

Letter to the Editor:

STOP 101 MARSHALL

Have you wondered what's going on in that big plot of dirt located just as you take First Street off Paterson Plank Road eastbound, heading into Hoboken? You may find the answer disturbing...

Manhattan Builders has begun construction of a complex that consists of twin buildings, each 17 stories tall , known as "Gateway" or the "101 Marshall Street" project. These buildings will rise 158 feet, 4 inches when finished, nearly 60 feet higher than the Palisade Cliffs. Upon completion they will contain: 326 residential units; parking for 431 vehicles; 2 restaurants; a 25,584 square foot health club; and 5,240 square feet of retail space. They will consume the entire city block on which they're built.

How did the Heights community - and most of Hoboken - not know of this project until just recently? Virtually no one lives in the 200 foot radius surrounding the project that received zoning variance notices, so few people--even city officials--knew of the project until recently. The project has been around, in various forms, since 1998. It was originally a René Abreu project that he sold to Manhattan Builders in 2000.

Does the project have any public objection? Yes! We in the Heights have begun a petition against this and other proposed high-rise projects that will obstruct the Palisade Cliff line. We are protesting over-sized buildings, not development itself. We are urgently concerned about the impact this project will have on traffic, congestion, utilities, pollution, density, flooding and general quality of life matters for us here in the Heights. Has this complex been fully integrated with the Light Rail construction occurring next door? No one has seen a recent traffic study that incorporates the Light Rail, the related expansion of sections of Paterson Plank Road, 101 Marshall Street, and the proposed "Cliffside" project at what was the book bindery at 101 Paterson Plank Road (the brick structure that hugs the cliff at the base of Mountain Road).

We are trying to work with residents in Hoboken who are also opposed to the scale of this project and the questionable manner in which it was approved. Yes, that's the bad news: this project is approved and has all but its final above-ground permits. It just succeeded in obtaining sewage hook-up permission from the North Hudson Sewage Authority, after being denied due to concerns of the flooding that routinely occurs in the area.

Where's the hope in all this? We are appealing to Jersey City government to examine the impact of this project to the area we all share and review the notification process to Jersey City and its affected residents. A private suit is being considered as a possible means to get the project brought down in scale and height.

We are asking for help from all our concerned neighbors here in the Heights. We are optimistic that public pressure can sway public policy and change not only the direction of this project, but all the planned projects along the path of the Light Rail.

Once these buildings are up, it's unlikely they will soon come down. Tell your neighbors. Contact our committee.

Monya McCarty
The "Modify 101 Marshall Street" Committee

PARK FAIR: A GREAT SUCCESS!

RNA's 18th Annual Park Fair and Flea Market was a great success! The day was perfect with a blue sky and a mild weather. The Park looked great after being spruced up by the City. Approximately 1,000 people attended the Fair, browsing and buying vendors' merchandise, sampling the foods, learning about the community and enjoying each other's company. Initial tallies indicate that RNA took in its largest gross receipts ever. A detailed report with the names of all the volunteers will appear in next month's newsletter. Thanks to all for making this a banner year for RNA and the community.

MEETING MINUTES: Tuesday, May 14, 2002

The meeting opened at 7:45 Pm.

Police Officers Mike Reyes and Ed Rutkowski gave an update of police efforts in our community. Five warrants were served in Riverview-Fisk Park. The police also made numerous drug arrests, including one at 29 Franklin Street and four in the vicinity of Franklin and Palisade Avenue. Numerous summons were issued for parking and violation of various city ordinances.

There was a general consensus among the membership that despite the increased patrols in the Park, there was still a lot of negative activity in the Park caused by gangs of young adults. Several people also complained that when the Mobile Precinct was stationed in the Park, it was not being staffed with any officers and thus lost its value as a deterrent to criminal activity.

There was an announcement about several rat sightings along Ogden Avenue because of the current rail construction at the base of the cliffs. The **Division of Rodent Control** provided brochures and red plastic drinking cups to the membership.

The **Holland Street** clean-up and spring planting was announced for Saturday, May 18th.This year the committee was soliciting corporate donations to buy plants and other necessities for the cliff side gardens being cultivated along the road.

Ron Clemente of the Neighborhood Improvement District (NID) provided an update of his activities. He announced that Mountain Road is now scheduled to be cleaned twice a week, including street sweeping, street crews and emptying of garbage receptacles. The DPW is responsible for the picking of abandoned shopping carts in the neighborhood. At present, the Division of Animal Control is not picking up stray animals because their contract with the State

has expired.

He issued a summons to 262 Ogden Avenue because of backyard debris and overflowing garbage containers. He provided information to the new owners of 383 Ogden on the need for building permits for all renovations.

The next speaker was **Leon Yost** of the **Jersey City Landmarks Conservancy** who made an hour long slide presentation of various historic buildings and sites located throughout the Heights community. The slides depicted the buildings both in the past and what they looked like now. [*See the article and catalogue of sites in the article following the Minutes.*]

Next on the agenda, was a discussion regarding several high-rise projects in Hoboken that RNA has been monitoring. **Monya McCarty** announced that she has started a petition against the twin 17-story towers project, known as Gateway, which is currently being built on Marshall Street.

There was a status report on the upcoming Park Fair scheduled for Saturday, June 1st. People were asked to volunteer some time during that day to coordinate this event.

The meeting ended at 9:25 PM.

Maria Tuzzo, Secretary

The Historic Heights Slide Show

The main guest speaker at RNA's May meeting was **Leon Yost** of the **Jersey City Landmarks Conservancy**. He entertained and also educated the membership with an hour long slide show depicting old and new images of the Heights community. His commentary was informative and fun.

It was a fascinating tour of our neighborhood, introducing historic buildings and sites that were unknown to the majority of the members. A special thanks to **Bob Leach**, of the **Jersey City Historical Project**, who co-sponsored the presentation.

The show included the following sites:

1) *Jersey City Garden*, 196 Ogden Avenue. Boxing every Tuesday night. Destroyed by fire in 1964.
2) *Koven Stove Works*, Paterson Plank Road & Mountain Road. Still standing.
3) *Wagon Elevator*, built 1875 and Trolley Trestle, built 1885. Down the Palisades at Ferry Street. The brick trestle footings are still there, under the brush on the diffs near Pohlmann's Hall.
4) *Pohlmann's Hall*, 154 Ogden Avenue. The only site in the Heights listed on the State & National Registers of Historic Places.
5) *Public Service Trolley Power Station*, 324 Palisade Avenue. Now, Christ Hospital Annex.
6) *Public Service Headquarters*, 325 Palisade Avenue. Now, Jersey City municipal building.
7) *The cannon* in Riverview-Fisk Park.
8) *Trolley accident* at Palisade Avenue & Franklin Street, Midnight, May 31st, 1906, showing R. Schmidt's Grocery Store which was wrecked.
9) *Holland Street*, the last intact cobbled street in the Heights. Originally it was called Van Vorst Place.
10) *The Van Vorst House* on Palisade Avenue, the second oldest house in Jersey City, built 1740.
11) *The Newkirk House*, aka Summit House, 510 Summit Avenue, the oldest standing house in Jersey City, built in 1690.
12) *The Sip House* that once stood at Bergen Avenue and Newkirk Street, built in1664, which was moved to Westfield NJ in the 1920s.
13) *Pathe silent-picture studio* which once stood at the southeast corner of Ogden Avenue & Congress Street. Mary Pickford filmed there.
14) *John M. Hughes House Moving Company.*
15) *Trains in the Erie Railroad's Bergen Arches* cut in 1909 and Pavonia Trolleys alongside.
16) *Construction of the Lackawanna Tunnel* and current renovation work.
17) *Early views of the Reservoir.*
18) *Franco American Food Company*, formerly on Central Avenue next to St. Nicholas Church.
19) *PS 7*, the oldest standing Public School building in Jersey City at Central Avenue & Congress Street.
20) *Interior views of Mt Sinai Synagogue*, 128 Sherman Avenue.
21) *Interior views of the Second Reformed Church* which contains the most elaborate stained glass windows in the Heights. Summit Avenue & Zabriskie Street.

For more information about the work of the **Jersey City Landmarks Conservancy,** call (201) 420-1885 or visit our web site at:*www.jclandmarks.org.*

COMMUNITYUPDATES

[*Correction: In last month's article regarding New Jersey Transit's current renovations of their PATH systems, the Bergen Tunnels were incorrectly identified as the Palisade Path Tunnels. Ed.*]

GATEWAY PROJECT: During May, the **Tri-City Sewerage Authority** rescinded their denial of the sewerage permit for this project after a settlement was reached with the developers. The next step is for the Department of Environmental Protection and the City of Hoboken to approve the settlement.

Residents of both Hoboken and Jersey City Heights are continuing to lobby Hoboken's City Council to file a lawsuit based on the project's history and irregular approval process.

Members of the Heights community are also organizing against this project is several ways. A petition drive has been initiated against the project. Plans are being made to meet with officials to discuss the fact that apparently neither the City of Jersey City or Hudson County was legally notified about the numerous hearings regarding this project.

Residents of both communities continue to meet and will shortly decide whether to file their own citizen's lawsuit against the City of Hoboken to stop this project.

The two 17-story towers of the Gateway project will house 326 residential units, two restaurants, a 25,384 square foot health club, 5,240 square feet of retail space and an enclosed

parking garage that will rise seven stories with 431 spaces. The towers would rise approximately 158 feet each - 100 feet beyond the normal zoning for that area and almost sixty feet beyond the diffs themselves.
[*For more information about this project, see the Letter to the Editor on page 2.*]

720 MONROE: Members of RNA and the Heights community have also been monitoring another hi-rise project in Hoboken in the Northwest Development Area. It is the renovation of the old Levolor factory complex that has been an artist residence and work space for many years. The proposal is to build four 13-story towers that will encompass an open space and commercial retail area. Hoboken residents are against this project because of its size. Heights residents are against the project, because as with the Gateway project, it will block the views from and of the historic Palisade diffs. There is fear that it will set a terrible precedent for future hi-rise projects along Hoboken's western boundary.

RNA has begun working with Hoboken residents to lobby the City to pass "view plain" legislation to limit the height of future projects.

POLICE: During the month of May, RNA executives had two more meetings with **Captain Joseph Pizzalenti** and **Lieut. Robert Kilduf** regarding the problems in our community and specifically in Riverview-Fisk Park. Despite the stepped up patrols in and around the Park, there still was a lot of rowdy and unlawful activity. Because of the chronic nature of the problem, everyone, seeing any unlawful or even suspicious behavior, is being asked to take note of the individuals involved and, if possible the automobile license plate in order to make a report to the police. RNA is not advocating that anyone get involved but just get a description of the alleged perpetrators. *RNA is asking all concerned neighbors, friends and members to come to the June 11th meeting to discuss strategies to address this problem before the summer months.*

PARKS: During May, RNA executives and other community residents met with the Division of Parks (DP) in Riverview-Fisk Park to discuss a list of maintenance and improvement concerns that needed to be addressed for this season. As a result of the meeting, the following improvements have already occurred in the Park: 1) the long awaited water faucet has been installed in the Park's community garden and 2) the installation of three sets of rumple strips on Ogden Avenue between Griffith and Bowers Streets.

The DP has also promised to make the following improvements in two of the Park's lawns: lawn resodding and the installation of flower/shrubbery gardens. The gardens will be enclosed with wrought iron fencing similar to the other flower gardens in the Park and surrounded with benches. It is hoped that the installation of this type of improvement will deter the use of these lawns for soccer and volleyball tournaments which have turned the lawns in question into dust bowls. The DP will also cut the overgrown tree and shrub growth along the Park's lower walkway from Bower Street to the pavilion.

Grassroots Mail is Urgently Needed - Urging Governor Not to Back Down and to Terminate Liberty State Park Development Corp.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Commissioner Bradley Campbell gave the **Liberty State Park Development Corporation** (DevCorp) until June 3 to show cause why it shouldn't be terminated due to its financial mismanagement and "its direction not coinciding with the park's mission." **Governor Jim McGreevey** is reported to be under heavy pressure from the DC's "power-broker" and political connections to prevent its termination. New Jerseyans have wasted enough years fighting their obscene commercial plans for our sacred and majestic park. Last July, a statewide coalition of leading environmental and civic organizations and the Communications Workers of America #1037, urged candidate McGreevey to pledge to oust the DC from the park.

The Governor has sent out a letter stating that he will make an announcement "in the summer." The **Friends of LSP** and the **LSP Conservancy** ask all believers in a free, and green urban oasis next to Lady Liberty, to please write to the Governor to help free the park once and for all from this public-be-damned private corporation which "violates the park's spirit"(The Record, 5/8) and must get it's "plug pulled" (The Jersey Journal, 5/13). "The group's name, the Development Corp., speaks volumes about the problem"(Asbury Park Press, 4/10).

Please urge the Gov.- not to back down and to end the state's contract with the DevCorp. Write Governor James E. McGreevey at P.O. Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625, or go to his website's email form at *www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.html.*

The Gov. can listen to the strong statewide voice of the People or be a collaborator with the park's internal enemy. New Jerseyans are watching.

Additional info can be obtained at these websites:
a) **Friends of Liberty State Park**: *http://www.folsp.org*
b) **Liberty State Park Conservancy**: *http://www.libertystateparkconservancy.com*
c) **NY/NJ Baykeeper**: *http://www.nynjbaykeeper.org.*

RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER, PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND!

Jehovah's Witness *Continued from page 1*

community's legitimate concerns that this facility will only exacerbate existing traffic and parking problems in this residential community. The another issue is the interruption of the streetscape wit parked cars that would protude beyond the building facade.

All interested in learning more about this project should come to RNA's June 11th meeting to see the plans and discuss the position of the community to this building.

BULLETIN BOARD

SUMMER JOB OPPORTUNITY

Anyone interested in applying for the position of sports coordinator for Riverview-Fisk Park this summer, should contact Clif Steinbring at (201) 386-9481. The person must be at least 18 years of age and capable of supervising youngsters, teenagers and young adults.

Be advised that RNA is not hiring any individuals. This is a City employment opportunity. RNA is only assisting the City in advertising the positions to local individuals in the neighborhood.

RNA E-MAIL LIST

RNA is announcing the formation of an e-mail address list for its members, friends and neighbors. The list will be used to transmit emergency notices regarding community issues and also announcements for upcoming events.

This list will not be used for solicitation, given to other organizations or sold to commercial enterprises.

Please send your personal e-mail address to the following location: *RNA@gitch.net.*

savethepalisades.org

For information about our Heights community and upcoming events in the neighborhood, visit the *savethepal - isades.org* website.

Contribute to Your Community Newsletter

Tell us what you think about this newsletter. Send articles, opinions, announcements, poems and recipes to: RNA, 469 Palisade Avenue or to: *RNA@gitch.net.* Next newsletter deadline is: **June 21th.**

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Support RNA and the community by paying your annual membership dues of **$7.00 per person** at the June 11h meeting or sending a check, payable to RNA, to 232 Ogden Avenue.

Membership entitles you to the monthly newsletter and voting privileges, if you live within the RNA boundaries. RNA's boundaries are **Ogden** and **Palisade Avenues** from **Cuneo Place** to **Congress Street**.

POLICE BEAT: 201-547-5477

Residents should contact the police, when they have a problem, safety concern or knowledge of a criminal or suspicious activity. When leaving a message, include your name, telephone number, street address, the nature of the problem, an accurate description of the individual(s) and/or vehicle involved and date and time of the message.

Anyone with information about illegal drug use and/or drug dealing, should contact the **Narcotics Unit** at **(201) 547-5391**. All call will be strictly confidential.

For all health, safety or criminal emergencies: call **911**.

PUBLIC SAFETY SURVEY

RNA is compiling statistics about the most pressing problems in our neighborhood. The results of the survey will be given to our City officials to help them better understand how to improve our community.

Please take a minute and check off the specific problems you think are affecting your quality of life. Detach the completed survey and mail it to RNA, 496 Palisade Avenue, Jersey City, 07307.

PROBLEM **LOCATION/TIME**

___ Abandoned Housing _____
___ Alcohol Drinking _____
___ Animal Littering _____
___ Auto Thefts _____
___ Building Code Violations _____
___ Burglaries _____
___ Dangerous Animals _____
___ Disorderly Groups _____
___ Gambling _____
___ Narcotics Activity _____
___ Noise _____
___ Parking _____
___ Prostitution _____
___ Sanitation/Garbage Disposal _____
___ Suspicious Activity _____
___ Traffic _____
___ Unsafe/Unhealthy Conditions _____
___ Other _____

RECYCLE GARBAGE & DISPOSABLES - IT'S THE LAW!

The Jersey City Incinerator Authority recycles the following materials:

PAPER: newspapers, magazines, junk mail, school paper, office paper, computer paper, telephone books, all cardboard boxes and corrugated boxes, cereal boxes, pasta boxes, laundry detergent boxes

PLASTICS: milk cartons, drink boxes, plastic milk containers, food containers, household cleaner containers, laundry detergent bottles, shampoo bottles

GLASS: soda bottles, beer bottles, food jars, liquor bottles

CANS: aluminum, tin, steel (no chemical or paint cans)

WEDNESDAY is our neighborhood pick-up day for recycling. For more information, call **(201) 432-4645**.

RNA EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chair: Clif Steinbring
Vice Chair: Margi Daly
Secretary: Maria Tuzzo
Treasurer: Vito Brunetti
Sgt.-at-Arms: Doris Brown

FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

RIVERVIEW NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
469 PALISADE AVENUE
JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY 07307

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Help Organize with Your Community at RNA's next meeting on Tuesday, June 11th at 7:15 PM

Trestle to Hoboken from Jersey City Heights (circa 1885)

For more information see Historic Heights article on page 3